"MMR"

by James Kellow, MMR 202

I started work on meeting the NMRA requirements for the Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation in 1990. On June 27, 1993, I had the final judging that completed my seventh certification area and qualified me for the MMR award. As I write this I am scheduled to be presented with the award at the NMRA National Convention on Aug. 6, 1993, in Valley Forge, Pa.

Was the effort worth it? What does "MMR" really mean?

The answer for "was it worth it?" is definitely yes. The effort made me a much better modeler. It made me get involved in facets of the hobby and learn about the prototype we model in ways that I previously had not even thought about. I learned construction methods and techniques as well as the use of various materials to simulate prototype construction. I learned about electrical applications that previously I had only heard about. I learned a little about architecture and building construction, plumbing and interior detailing of structures. I experienced that fear of entering, and later the thrill of winning, model contest. I met and had help from a lot of people, both members and non-members of the NMRA. I joined the first model railroad club I have ever belonged to and also built a completely new layout in O scale traction. I acquired the confidence to believe that I am capable of building any project I want and that it will be a very good model. I learned some metal working skills, soldering, and the use of a lathe, drill press and a milling machine.

I still consider myself a beginner, but my O scale all-brass, scratchbuilt trolleys won first place in the 1992 O Scale Convention and the Vane A. Jones Best of Trolleys award at the 1993 O Scale Convention. In addition I was recently asked to scratchbuild several models for other modelers. This was a big boost to my ego. I also learned how to write articles, and as a result have a column on scratchbuilding which appears in the *48FT./"O" Scale News Magazine* and I am discussing a book with one of the hobby publishers.

As I now look back over the last several years, I remember both the frustrations and thrills of the achievement program. For me it has been very rewarding and I very strongly recommend it to modelers who are interested in scratchbuilding and learning the prototype. I guarantee that at the very minimum it will make you a much better modeler and have you meet a lot of NMRA people who will go out of their way to help you.

What does being an MMR mean? At this point I would say it is a first step in my continuing modeling education. I only completed the requirements yesterday, and frankly after the thrill and satisfaction of the achievement, I don't feel any different. I owe a great debt of thanks to several NMRA members and Achievement Program officials, without whose help I would never have finished the program. I found out how much the Achievement Program officials were there to help and how devoted they are to the success of the program. I also found out first hand that "anyone" can be successful in achieving the MMR. It is not a program for a select few and it does not require that every model you build be of contest-winning quality at the NMRA National Convention. It does require an honest effort to educate yourself about the prototype and to strive for excellence in your modeling projects. I found that a significant part of the program involves self education and independent research about the prototype being modeled as well as development of your written communication skills. I guess in a nutshell I would say that having achieved the MMR you are a more educated, resourceful, careful, confident, articulate modeler of a prototype railroader.

If I had it to do over again the only thing I would change is the amount of time I spent completing the achievement categories. I would slow down and enjoy it more. I found as I got closer to my goal, I was spending more time to complete it. This detracted from time with my family and other interests. In fairness, this was a mistake.

So to me the MMR award is a major step in my continuing education about our hobby. It is a program that I believe any modeler has the skill to achieve. It is also a program that requires effort on the part of the modeler to complete. I am convinced any modeler will agree the effort is well worth the reward. As one television commercial used to say it, "Try it, you'll like it." Best of luck.